



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

## COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

### ★ ★ ★ ANNUAL REPORT 2009 ★ ★ ★

*"Veterans helping Veterans"*

Letter of Transmittal:

November 2, 2009

The Honorable Isiah Leggett, Montgomery County Executive  
The Honorable Philip Andrews, President, Montgomery County Council  
Uma S. Ahluwalia, Director, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services

The Commission on Veterans Affairs is pleased to present a summary of its activities since we had our first meeting in March, 2009. We have begun to advise and consult with you on issues of concern to the estimated over 60,000 veterans, and their families, who live in Montgomery County. Under your leadership and with your support, the Commission is mandated to research, assemble, analyze and disseminate information that will assist in meeting the needs of veterans and their families.

The Commissioners bring knowledge and expertise to the County by providing valuable input and advice on issues affecting our veterans. We have focused on identifying veterans and their family members, on recognition of active military and veterans and particularly those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our great nation. Most recently, the Commission voted to recommend to you to rename the Rockville Library to the Rockville Memorial Library in honor of fallen soldiers. We thank you for the Veteran's Day 2009 poster located at the bottom of the page that will be displayed in every library with a bookmark that will be distributed. In an effort to do outreach to the broader active military and veteran community, we are proud of the new County Veterans Affairs website that has Facebook and Twitter. Several of the Commissioners are involved in a new peer group that meets monthly called "V2VMC" (Volunteer to Veterans Montgomery County). We have participated in the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs Muster held on October 17, 2009 at Casey Community Center. We are supporting "A Tribute to America's Veterans" concert to be held at the Roundhouse Theatre on November 10, 2009 along with Silver Spring Town Center, Inc.. In this report you will find our policy recommendations and other organizational materials for your consideration and review.

We wish to recognize and give our personal thanks to all Commissioners, the many community members, and the agency staff who participate in our meetings for their commitment and dedication. We would like to acknowledge DHHS Director Uma Ahluwalia for her role in meeting with the Boards, Commissions and Committees to keep us informed of important health and human services issues; Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison, Carly Clem, OSC, and Mariam Chase, Behavioral Health & Crisis Services, for their outstanding support in providing the Commission with the resources needed to carry out our mission. This report is the result of our combined efforts.

It has been a pleasure to work with you and members of the Commission during our term of service. We are confident that you will continue to support the Commission's efforts to enhance the lives of our veterans. Our meetings are open to the public, and we invite you to join us for any meeting.

Sincerely,



*Bill Gray*

Bill Gray  
Chair

*Jonathan B. Walker, Sr., P.E.*

Jonathan B. Walker, Sr., P.E.  
Vice-Chair



[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/veterans](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/veterans)

# MEMBERSHIP LIST

2008 - 2009

## VETERANS REPRESENTATIVES

Pete Esker, American Legion  
Rich Fales, Veterans of Foreign Wars  
Bill Gray, Vietnam Veterans of America  
J. Mauri Hamilton, PhD, Disabled American Veterans  
Roland R. Kauffman, Vietnam Veterans of America  
Norman Locksley, American Legion  
Elizabeth (Jane) McCarthy, American Legion  
Jonathan B. Walker, P.E., Former U.S. Marine

## GENERAL PUBLIC MEMBERS

Susan W. Kirk  
Lorrie Knight-Major  
Jacqueline Hunt Ogg  
Mier Wolf

## EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Jerry S. Godwin, Dept. of Economic Development  
Richard M. Schiffauer, Dept. of HHS  
Michael L. Subin, Office of the County Executive

## NON-VOTING CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Ann Humphrey, Office of Rep. Chris Van Hollen

## STAFF

Betsy Luecking, *Staff Liaison*  
Carly Clem, *Office Services Coordinator*  
Mariam Chase, *Behavioral Health & Crisis Services*



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Visit our website to **sign up for eSubscribe** to receive emails about Veterans information and resources. <https://ext01.montgomerycountymd.gov/entp/s1p/esubpublic/newssubscriber.do>



**Sign up for emergency alerts from Alert Montgomery!** Alert Montgomery can deliver important alerts, notifications and updates to you on all of your devices at once: email account, cell phone, text page, Blackberry, wireless PDA, or XM Radio Channel 214.  
<https://alert.montgomerycountymd.gov>

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## COMMISSION PRESENTATIONS FOR 2009

**March:** *"Welcome"* ~ Uma Ahluwalia, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

*"Remarks"* ~ Wilbert B. Forbes, Sr., Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs

*"Remarks"* ~ Fred Nordhorn, Prince George's County Commission on Veterans Affairs

**April:** *"Military Outreach Initiative"* ~ Jessica McNurlen, Mental Health Association

*"Combat 2 College Program"* ~ Professor Rose Sachs, Montgomery College

**May:** *"Lt. Governor's Maryland's Commitment to Veterans"* ~ Laura J. Copland, MA, LCMHC, Director, Behavioral Health Disaster Services, Maryland Department of Health & Mental Hygiene

**May: May 6th Special Presentation:** *"Veteran's Claims and Benefits Workshop"* ~ Gregory V. Hamilton, Council President, American Indian Heritage and Education Association, Inc., and Margo L. Williams, Director of Veterans Affairs

**June:** *"Veterans Recognition Planning for the County. What County Recognition Planning Is Already In the Works? What Are Your Ideas for Veterans Recognition?"* ~ Mike Subin, Commissioner and Chair of Veterans Recognition Workgroup

*"History on the Naming of the Rockville Library"* ~ Chuck Short, Special Assistant to the County Executive

*"Veterans Muster Event for October 17, 2009"* ~ Cate Conroy, Deputy Director, Outreach & Advocacy, Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs; and Harvey Kaplan, Colonel, U.S. Army (Ret), Commissioner, Maryland Veterans Commission

**July:** *"Commission on Veterans Affairs Website and Possible Inclusion of Facebook and Twitter"* ~ Lee Caughron, Cable TV Program Manager, Montgomery County Government

**August:** *"Overview: US Army National Security Seminar Experience"* ~ Shandy R. Campbell, Ed.D., Program Manager, DHHS - Behavioral Health & Crisis Services

**September:** *"Department of Veterans Affairs Silver Spring Readjustment and Counseling Center: Services, Challenges and Opportunities for Partnerships"* ~ Wayne Miller, Team Leader, Silver Spring Vet Center

*"Veterans Recognition, Services and Outcomes"* ~ The Honorable Isiah Leggett, County Executive

**October:** *"Veterans Day Planning"* ~ Bill Gray, Chair, and Jerry Godwin, Commissioner, reported on preparations for Veterans Day

*"Overview of White Paper - Understanding the Needs of Returning Troops and Their Families"* ~ Hope Gleicher, Consultant

# ABOUT THE COMMISSION



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

*News Release*

For Immediate Release: 6/9/2008

## **Leggett Introduces Legislation to Establish Veterans Commission**

Following up on a plan introduced by County Executive Isiah Leggett, legislation to establish a Commission on Veterans Affairs will be introduced at tomorrow's County Council meeting. Bill 23-08, Commission on Veterans Affairs, is sponsored by County Council President Mike Knapp. A public hearing on the legislation is tentatively scheduled for July 8 at 1:30 p.m.

"There are approximately 60,000 veterans who call Montgomery County home and we are thankful for their service to our nation," said Leggett, a combat veteran of the Vietnam War. "The commission is a way to hear from these men and women and their families about how we can prepare for their return and welcome them back to the community. I urge the Council to pass the legislation creating the commission."

"I am thrilled that Montgomery County is leading the state in establishing a Veterans Commission charged with identifying the needs, resources, and opportunities for our veterans that will help to meet our veterans' needs and improve the quality of their lives," said Lorrie Knight-Major, mother of injured Iraqi War veteran Sgt. Ryan Major.

## **HISTORY**

The Commission on Veterans Affairs was established by County legislation in 2008 to advise the County Executive and County Council on the coordination and development of the County's policies affecting veterans and their families.

## **MISSION**

The Commission's responsibilities are to research, assemble, analyze and disseminate information and educational materials relating to activities and programs that will assist in meeting the needs of veterans and their families; institute and conduct educational and other programs, meetings, and conferences to promote the rights and opportunities for veterans; advise the Executive and the Council on the status of programs and services in the State and County related to the needs of veterans and their families; and assist in planning appropriate public acknowledgement of the contributions made by veterans, and assist in planning.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

The Commission on Veterans Affairs is composed of fifteen voting members and one non-voting who serve in a volunteer capacity. Members are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council.

The Commission includes:

- ▶ 8 Veterans,
- ▶ 4 General Public, and
- ▶ 3 Ex-Officio Members
- ▶ 1 Non-Voting Congressional Representative

## **MEETINGS**

All Commission and Committee meetings are open to the public. The Commission welcomes visitors to join us as we serve the County and its residents. Meetings are subject to change without advance notice. Please call to confirm day and time of meetings and to request any special accommodations. As possible, we adjust meeting dates in order to accommodate days of major religious observances. You can view the Commission meeting minutes online at:

[www.montgomerycountymd.gov/veterans](http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/veterans)

### **MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2009 - 2010**

#### **Full Commission Meeting**

3rd Tuesday of the month

401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD 20850

6:30pm - 8:00pm

Rockville, MD 20850

1st Floor Tan Conference Room

**Workgroups** meet, as needed, at differing locations.

# TROOPS AND FAMILY CARE FUND FEASIBILITY STUDY

Published by The Community Foundation in partnership with Montgomery County Government

## Troops and Family Care Fund Feasibility Study White Paper for Discussion and Action

### Background - What did we ask? Who did we ask? Why did we ask?

Throughout 2007, leaders of nonprofit organizations, government representatives and our donors began to contact the Community Foundation for the National Region with concerns about the well-being of military service members and their families in our region. As often happens with an emerging issue, they expressed a desire to better understand the needs and to work together to craft a response. In early 2008, The Community Foundation joined with Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett to commission a study to determine the feasibility of a community-based nonprofit response to complement government and national nonprofit efforts to ease the hardships of deployment to Afghanistan and Iraq and post-deployment reintegration for troops and families in the National Capital Region.

The objectives of the study were to determine 1) the size, scope, needs of and resources for military personnel and their families experiencing deployment and/or post-deployment reintegration into the National Capital Region resulting from military service in Iraq and/or Afghanistan; and 2) the likelihood that adequate philanthropic dollars could be raised over the next several years to increase the community's capacity to address the needs.

### Just The Numbers (as of May 2008)

#### Nationwide

- Approximately 1.6 million soldiers have been deployed to either or both Afghanistan and Iraq. More than one-third of these soldiers have been deployed more than once.
- 40% of troops and veterans are National Guard and Reservists, higher than in any other wars. National Guard members are an "older cohort... with little connection to military communities or Department of Veteran Affairs."

#### National Capital Region

- An estimated 36,967 soldiers have "ever deployed" and an estimated 6,020 are "currently deployed" to Afghanistan and/or Iraq. Of these, 5,320 have "ever deployed" and 931 are "currently deployed" from Montgomery and Prince George's Counties. 3,101 have "ever deployed" and 509 are "currently deployed" from DC. 28,546 have "ever deployed" and 4,580 are "currently deployed" from Northern Virginia.
- There are more than 700 soldiers and 1,000 family members who are in the area at any one time by virtue of the specialized care provided by the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda and Walter Reed Army Medical Center on the border of DC and Silver Spring. The average length of stay for most of the wounded warriors at Walter Reed is more than 380 days.

#### Casualties and Wounded

- The military reports that 208 soldiers from our region have died in the two wars and 1,218 have been wounded in action.
- The number of unique OEF/OIF veterans treated at VA facilities (other than Vet Centers) in the National Capital Region was 8,358 from FY2002 through 2007. The percentage who have sought VA healthcare increased from 33% as of April 2007 to 35% as of October 2007 to 37% as of May 2008. There are about 400,000 pending VA disability claims. The average wait time for a disability claim is 183 days, but for claims that are appealed, the wait-time is almost two years. More than 638,000 new VA claims are expected over the next 5 years.

NUMBERS OF DEPLOYED OEF/OIF TROOPS				
	Ever	Currently	Died	Seriously Wounded
<b>MD</b>	<b>16,628</b>	<b>2,911</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>445</b>
<b>Active</b>	7,569	1,259		
<b>Reserve</b>	9,059	1,652		
<b>Mo, PG Co.</b>	5,320	931		
<b>VA</b>	<b>135,936</b>	<b>21,811</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>751</b>
<b>Active</b>	120,086	18,223		
<b>Reserve</b>	15,850	3,588		
<b>NoVa</b>	28,546	4,580		
<b>DC</b>	<b>3,101</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Active</b>	2,341	412		
<b>Reserve</b>	760	97		

See entire [Troops and Family Care Fund Feasibility Study White Paper for Discussion and Action](#).



# FY10 OPERATING BUDGET TESTIMONY

**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs  
FY 10 Budget Priorities before the Montgomery County Council  
April 15, 2009  
Bill Gray - Chairman  
Jonathan B. Walker Sr. PE, - Vice-Chairman**

My name is Bill Gray, Chairman, Commission on Veterans Affairs. Along with me are Jonathan Walker, Sr., Vice-Chair, and other Commissioners. We want to thank County Executive Leggett and the Council for creating and passing the legislation to create a county Commission on Veterans Affairs. Over the last several months, we have setup committees and have begun outreach to our veterans in the County. As a commission we have started to work on our mission and evaluating the immediate needs of our veterans:

## **1. Veterans Recognition Workgroup**

The Commission has established a workgroup which will develop plans to honor and recognize our fallen heroes, the outstanding work of our veterans, veterans businesses, volunteers, and our Gold Star mothers and Fathers. We will be coming to you to assist us in recognition events and funding.

## **2. Services Coordination and Technical Assistance to Veterans applying for Benefits and Compensation**

Some state and county governments have paid accredited Veterans Service Officers on staff to assist veterans and families who are seeking services or applying for benefits. Montgomery County does not have an in-house service program to assist veterans. We recommend that for the new 311 Information Line that staff be trained on Veterans issues and benefits. We further ask that the Council provide at least one staff work year for information and referral on veterans benefits to include evening and weekend hours. Veterans often need assistance in filling out the forms before being sent to Baltimore for evaluation. Our goal is to shorten the process instead of having veterans wait 18-24 months.

## **2. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other Prevalent Health and Wellness Issues**

The Veterans Administration will treat vets for PTSD but not the families dealing with it. We need county funding to do the initial diagnosis of PTSD in order to refer the veteran to the VA initially. The new out processing procedures catch the majority of PTSD cases but not all of them. Nobody likes to admit they have a problem and most deny it until they are forced to face it by their families or the courts. We should make it clear that the PTSD funding is to supplement and not replace already available VA programs. These will include programs and support groups for female and male veterans and their children in conjunction with PTSA and other service connected issues among the military returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. We will be looking at all service related health and wellness issues. The VA Medical Center in Washington DC has offered to provide to veterans monthly training on medical services for veterans with special needs. We ask that you designate \$5,000 to defray the mileage, room and refreshment cost of having one or two evenings set aside each month for briefings for veterans living in the county.

## **3. Outreach to Homeless and Incarcerated Veterans**

Because many of the homeless population in this county are veterans, we request that the Council allow the Commission to partner with other agencies and organizations to meet the following objectives:

**\*\*Re-establish the homeless outreach program for veterans in Montgomery County homeless shelters.**

**\*\*Re-establish veteran's priority beds at shelters such as Carroll House and other county facilities. The commission will draft a set of guidelines and recommendations for your review.**

## **4. Employment, Business Opportunities and Benefits**

From an economic development perspective, we want returning war veterans to know that Montgomery County is welcoming them back with open arms. Montgomery County is the ideal location for veterans to use their VA benefits to buy homes, to start businesses, or to get an education. Veterans are welcome to leverage their federal benefits and complement them with state and county benefits to achieve these goals here in our county.

The Commission is willing to facilitate training or meetings on homeownership, business start up and other related business and work programs

Please see the attached workgroups of the Commission, and we invited you to attend our meetings. Thank you for the opportunity to share our priorities with you. We look forward to working with you and hope our partnership will continue to send a message that veterans are an important part of Montgomery County.

# FY10 OPERATING BUDGET TESTIMONY

## Attachment I - Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs Proposed Workgroups – April 15, 2009 – Draft Bill Gray, Chair – Jonathan Walker, Sr. PE, Vice-Chair

*Please note that each workgroup will determine any needs assessment required and may include but not be limited to future needs, services and programs, including prevention and intervention programs that the Department of Veterans Administration, State of Maryland and Montgomery County government provide to veterans and their families.*

**1. Veterans Recognition Workgroup** will assist the County in planning appropriate public acknowledgment of the contributions made by veterans, and assist in planning commemoration activities recognizing the contributions made by veterans to now include those from Iraq/Afghanistan.

**Mike Subin - Chair**

Peter Esker

Mier Wolf

Paula Davis

Carol and Tom Barbieri

Ann Humphrey - Office of Congressman Chris Van Hollen

**2. Veterans Health& Wellness Workgroup** will work on issues that include health related issues affecting the needs of soldiers returning from Iraq and all other veterans including senior issues:

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder(PTSD)

Court System

Mental Health

Domestic Violence

Substance Abuse

Suicide Prevention

Traumatic Brain Injury(TBI)

Hearing loss

Blindness/Vision loss

Cancer

AIDS

Long Term Care

Spinal Cord Injury

Amputation

Diabetes

Family Caregivers

Attendant care

Respite

**Jane McCarthy - Chair**

Mauri Hamilton,

Rich Schiffauer

Jacqueline Hunt Ogg

Lorrie-Knight Major

Nelson Jackson

Ann Humphrey – Office of Congressman Chris Van Hollen

Ken Reichard – Office of Senator Ben Cardin

Mariam Chase, Staff Support, [mariam.chase@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:mariam.chase@montgomerycountymd.gov)

**3. Veterans/Families Benefits and Outreach Workgroup** will work on service programs to veterans/families and create an educational outreach program to educate the public at-large on veteran benefits and issues. Evaluate a single point of entry or service coordination model to assist Veterans applying for benefits. Make recommendations for Website, speaker's bureau, etc. Study Best Practices and their implications locally.

**Jonathan Walker - Chair**

Bill Gray

Gregory Hamilton

Jessica McNurlen

Mike Subin

**4. Housing, Homelessness & Incarcerated Veterans/Families Workgroup** will create a report on the numbers of people impacted and a plan to provide long term housing and supports. Identify housing subsidies, loan and resources to stay in home. Identify legal Resources.

**Roland Kauffman - Chair**

Susan Kirk

Norm Locksley

Rich Schiffauer

**5. Veterans Employment, Education & Business Workgroup** will create a report on the numbers of people impacted and a plan to address business loans, employment, and educational opportunities.

**Jerry Godwin - Chair**

Rich Fales

Goal is for each workgroup to make recommendations by July 1, 2009 to County Executive and County Council and the state and federal reps with approval of Intergovernmental Affairs. Betsy Luecking will provide staff support to the workgroup unless otherwise designated. Email all edits and changes to [betsy.luecking@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:betsy.luecking@montgomerycountymd.gov) or call 240-777-1256 (V).

# FY10 TOP TWO POLICY ISSUES

**COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS**  
**Montgomery County Council Health and Human Services (HHS) Worksession**  
**FY 10 Top 2 Policy Issues**  
**September 16, 2009**

Bill Gray, Chair | Jonathan Walker, Vice Chair

***Good Morning, my name is Bill Gray, and I am here presenting the top two policy issues of the Commission on Veterans Affairs for FY10.***

**1. The County needs to adopt a policy and platform to recognize active military and veterans for their service to our country to preserve our freedom.**

We recommend that the County:

- Recognize Veterans as a constituency in County public relations, outreach efforts, employment, and mission statements.
- Identify upfront during any departmental intake process if the individual or any immediate family member ever served in the U.S. Armed Forces, National Guard or Reserves, so that they all can be assessed for state and federal programs that they may be eligible for such as respite care for families with children who have developmental disabilities, or home care for veterans who are seniors. Uma Ahluwalia, Director, HHS has already agreed to do this and we thank her for that.

We will be working with Corrections and Police and other identified departments to do the same. We recommend that the Office of Human Resources work with MCGEO and other County unions to identify employees who are veterans and/or family members of veterans or County employees who are on active duty, and offer support to them. We encourage the County to ask all contractors and grantees to collect this same information in the intake process and supply this data to the County.

- Require all departments to apply for federal grants/seek out partnerships with the private and non-profit sector that would benefit Veterans and their spouses and children.
  - Develop an Annual Veterans Recognition Plan in partnership with our Commission which has short term and long term outcomes, and in particular plan to honor those soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice with input from their family members. This would include Memorial Day and Veterans Day programs to honor families, and County events that provide free passes to Veterans and family members.
- 2. The County should establish a Veteran's Service Office, similar to the Commission for Women, so that Veterans can identify a place that they can relate to in which to obtain information and services from the County, Commission and state and federal agencies in a proactive environment that supports Veterans and their families, with no stigma attached.**
- It would serve as a clearinghouse for veterans and their families, a one stop shop for Benefits and Claims Office where we would partner with State and Federal benefits workers to do intake and counseling in Montgomery County. In regards to poverty, there are homeless veterans and other veterans and their family members who may be eligible for benefits. Sadly, 95% of all homeless vets have been incarcerated at one time in their life. 5.7% percent of veterans were living in poverty, compared to 12 % of non-veterans as of 2007 according to the American Community Survey. In addition to what we see as trained therapists rotating in, the Commission members and other volunteers would volunteer to provide peer counseling and facilitate workshops for veterans and their spouses and children. Workshops might be conducted on finances, VA Home Loan Program, couple relationships, child raising tips, nutrition, wellness and health to name a few.
  - We recommend that the County work with the Veterans Administration Medical Center to establish a Community Based Outreach Clinic (CBOC) in the County to provide medical and psychiatric care for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Traumatic Brain Injury, the most prevalent mental/behavioral health disorders among service members returning from overseas deployment in the community, not just the VA hospitals. This CBOC would also provide same services and coordinate the care with the VA through screening.
  - The County can also work with those who can provide housing for the homeless and released incarcerated veterans. The County can provide additional benefits personnel to assist with filling out claims correctly, on a daily basis.

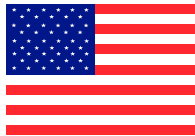


## FY10 TOP TWO POLICY ISSUES

- The Silver Spring Vet Center provides male and female non-medical services (Individual and Group counseling) to returning veterans from Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom and other Theater Veterans and their families during non-traditional hours (evenings). Plus they do bereavement counseling for the families (all hours), outreach, PTSD, sexual trauma, substance abuse, family/marital, homeless, woman veterans and benefits, employment, and medical referrals to appropriate services for the Veteran (VA and non VA). A benefits specialist from the American Legion and a Disabled Veterans Outreach Program from the Montgomery County Employment Services comes to their office to meet with veterans once a week.
- The VA will treat vets for medical and psychiatric PTSD but not the families dealing with it unless they have been referred by a psychiatrist. We need the County to do the initial written diagnosis of PTSD by a M.D. related to their military service (both combat and non-combat related) in order to refer the veteran to the VA initially.
- The new out processing procedures catch the majority of PTSD cases but not all of them as PTSD can be delayed and triggered by reintegration/life stressors. Nobody likes to admit they have a problem and most deny it until they are forced to face it by their families or the courts. We should make it clear that any County resources for programming supplement, not replace, already available VA programs. These will include programs and support groups for **both** female and male veterans and their children in conjunction with PTSD and other service connected issues among the military community.

We appreciate the opportunity to advise you on these issues which we feel will help our Veterans in the County. We hope that the County will continue its legacy of being a responsive and accountable government. Thank you.

*“Veterans helping Veterans”*



# FY11 OPERATING BUDGET TESTIMONY

## COMMISSION ON VETERANS AFFAIRS

### Montgomery County Health and Human Services (HHS)

#### FY 11 HHS Budget Forum Testimony

October 20, 2009

Bill Gray, Chair | Jonathan Walker, Vice Chair

As the newest HHS Commission, we appreciate the opportunity to share with you some of our top priorities for the upcoming year. We recognize that the County is in a severe budget crisis but we ask that you protect those in need and vulnerable in our community and also to provide or coordinate with the Veterans Health Administration for critically needed mental health services for persons with mental health and substance abuse problems. Of course we urge you to take advantage of any and all federally funded programs by the Department of Veterans Affairs.

We have just learned, that pending all approvals, the Silver Spring Veterans Center is moving to a new and much larger location in an office building across from NOAA on Colesville Road in April, 2010 very near the Silver Spring Transit Center. What we still need are service organization benefit claims counselors and medical treatment to be provided in Montgomery County. We need the County's assistance for the following:

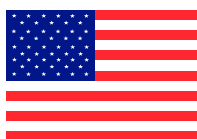
- We recommend that the County work with the Veterans Health Administration to establish a **Community Based Outreach Clinic (CBOC) in the County** to provide medical and psychiatric care for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Traumatic Brain Injury, the most prevalent mental/behavioral health disorders among service members returning from overseas deployment in the community, not just the VA hospitals. This CBOC would also provide same services and coordinate the care with the VA through screening. Hopefully, this CBOC would include a full time "Service Organization" benefits claims counselor. In Maryland, there are currently CBOC's located in Baltimore, Cambridge, Charlotte Hall, Cumberland, Fort Howard, Glen Burnie, Greenbelt, Hagerstown and Pocomoke.
- The new out processing procedures catch the majority of PTSD cases but not all of them as PTSD can be delayed and triggered by reintegration/life stressors. Nobody likes to admit they have a problem and most deny it until they are forced to face it by their families or the courts. We should make it clear that any County resources for programming supplement, not replace, already available VA programs.
- There needs to be more programs and support groups for women in the military, spouses and their children. According to the Troops and Family Care Fund Feasibility Study published by the Montgomery County Community Foundation 30% of women serving in the military have experienced sexual assault. There are financial implications of serving in the military and families have been severely impacted. Divorce rates in the active military have tripled and child abuse is up 30%.
- In regards to poverty, there are homeless veterans and other veterans and their family members who may be eligible for benefits. Sadly, 95% of all homeless vets have been incarcerated at one time in their life. 5.7% percent of veterans were living in poverty, compared to 12 % of non-veterans as of 2007 according to the American Community Survey.
- Commission members and other volunteers could volunteer to provide peer counseling and facilitate workshops for veterans and their spouses and children. Workshops might be conducted on finances, VA Home Loan Program, couple relationships, child raising tips, nutrition, wellness and health to name a few.
- The Silver Spring Vet Center administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs provides male and female non-medical services (Individual and Group counseling) to returning veterans from Operation Iraqi Freedom/ Operation Enduring Freedom and other Theater Veterans and their families during non-traditional hours (evenings). Plus they do bereavement counseling for the families (all hours), outreach, PTSD, sexual trauma, substance abuse, family/marital, homeless, woman veterans and benefits, employment, and medical referrals to appropriate services for the Veteran (VA and non VA). A benefits specialist from the American Legion and a Disabled Veterans Outreach Program from the Montgomery County Employment Services comes to their office to meet with veterans once a week.

## FY11 OPERATING BUDGET TESTIMONY

- The County should increase efforts to work with those who can provide housing for the homeless and released incarcerated veterans.
- The County work to help establish a Veterans Court program in Montgomery County, MD. This type of court rehabilitates Veterans in place of incarceration and the County can look to Erie, New York for program guidelines.
- Identify upfront during any County departmental intake process if the individual or any immediate family member ever served in the U.S. Armed Forces, National Guard or Reserves, so that they all can be assessed for state and federal programs that they may be eligible for such as respite care for families with children who have developmental disabilities, or home care for veterans who are seniors. Uma Ahluwalia, Director, HHS has already agreed to do this and we thank her for that.
- We will be working with Corrections and Police and other identified departments to do the same. We recommend that the Office of Human Resources work with MCGEO and other County unions to identify employees who are veterans and/or family members of veterans or County employees who are on active duty, and offer support to them.
- We encourage the County to ask all contractors and grantees to collect this same information in the intake process and supply this data to the County.
- Require all departments to apply for federal grants/seek out partnerships with the private and non-profit sector that would benefit Veterans and their spouses and children.
- We ask that the County continue to work to build partnerships between the military helping networks and community based non-profits.
- Recognize Veterans as a constituency in County public relations, outreach efforts, employment, and mission statements. We ask that the Office of Human Resources revise their Veterans Preference policy for hiring to create more job opportunities and be more in line with the Federal Government.
- Develop an Annual Veterans Recognition Plan in partnership with our Commission which has short term and long term outcomes, and in particular plan to honor those soldiers who have made the ultimate sacrifice with input from their family members. This would include Memorial Day and Veterans Day programs to honor families, and County events that provide free passes to Veterans and family members.

We appreciate the opportunity to advise you on these issues which we feel will help our Veterans in the County. We hope that the County will continue its legacy of being a responsive and accountable government. Thank you.

*“Veterans helping Veterans”*



## HOW TO CONTACT YOUR COUNTY ELECTED OFFICIALS



**County Executive  
Isiah Leggett**

The **County Executive** can be reached at:

Executive Office Building  
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor  
Rockville, MD 20850  
240-777-2500 (V)  
240-777-2544 (TTY)

[ocemail@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:ocemail@montgomerycountymd.gov)



**Montgomery County Council**

The **County Council** can be reached at:

Stella B. Werner Council Office Building  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850  
240-777-7900 (V)  
240-777-7914 (TTY)  
240-777-7888 (FAX)

[county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:county.council@montgomerycountymd.gov)

*Standing, left to right:* Mike Knapp, Nancy Navarro, George Leventhal, Valerie Ervin, and Marc Elrich.

*Seated, left to right:* Nancy Floreen, Vice President Roger Berliner, President Phil Andrews, and Duchy Trachtenberg

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**Isiah Leggett, County Executive  
Uma S. Ahluwalia, Director  
Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services  
401 Hungerford Drive  
Rockville, Maryland 20850  
240-777-1246 (V) or via MD Relay**

**Language translation and alternative formats of this report are available upon request.  
For additional information on the Commission, please call the telephone numbers or write to the  
address listed above or e-mail via the contact information listed below.**

*Montgomery County does not discriminate on the basis of disability in  
employment or in the admission or access to its programs or services.*

2008 - 2009 Annual Report Prepared By:

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